

284th BSB – Friedberg, Giessen



Photos by H.J. Schlink

Members of the 284th Base Support Battalion's U.S. Army Spitfire dragon boat racing team line up in preparation for the start of a second heat.

Racing to the beat of a dragon boat drum

Americans represent 284th BSB in Lahn River event

By Petra Roberts

284th Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

Until a few weeks ago most Soldiers and civilians in the 284th Base Support Battalion didn't even know what a dragon boat looked like.

Local Giessen city representatives hosted the first annual Dragon Boat Cup on the Lahn River and asked members of the 284th BSB to participate.

The first step for potential competitors

was figuring out exactly what they were getting themselves involved in. Researching the history of dragon boating, 284th BSB team members found out the tradition is attributed to an ancient Chinese hero who drowned after jumping into the river while protesting about government corruption. Dragon boat races sprang up in memory of his patriotism.

Over the years it has evolved into a traditional part of sports and entertainment for Chinese communities and for rowing clubs around the world.

Dragon boats are the world's largest flat water racing canoes propelled by a crew of 20 rowers. A drummer and helmsman keep the rowers in sync and on course. The vital part of dragon boat racing is rowing in sequence — not an easy job when 20 rowers go for speed.

Dragon boat rowing involves the whole body. Rowers must constantly adjust their position to gain extra speed.

A team comprised of Soldiers from the 284th BSB's Provost Marshal's Office, Head-

quarters and Headquarters Detachment, Chaplain's Office, 284th BSB civilians and members of the Heidelberg-based Extended Air Defense Task Force represented the local American community at the event.

Step two was finding a name for the team. The members decided on U.S. Army Spitfire.

The next step was training. Everyone agreed at least one training class was needed before the actual race — especially considering the U.S. team would be up against 31 other teams, some with years of experience.

While the team quickly got the hang of rowing the dragon boat, everybody walked away from the training session with very sore muscles.

Nevertheless after some well-earned rest, the U.S. Army Spitfire team was ready by race day. Team members dressed up in uniform T-shirts, hair painted orange (those who had hair) and U.S. flags arranged in their hair and their hats.

While members of the mixed gender team fought hard, they didn't win, but did manage to make it to the second round. Some of the best teams were not able to conquer their opponent during the first run, therefore completing two races was not a bad result for the U.S. team.

With a little experience behind them, next year the U.S. Army Spitfire team will go for the gold, members said.



The traditional dragon boats feature whimsical decorations and bright colors.



Dragon boat teams race for the finish line on the Lahn River in Giessen as they are urged on by the constant percussive accompaniment of their drummer.

POV re-sale lot open for business

One-stop location for buyers, sellers on Giessen Depot

By Sgt. Christian Allen

284th Base Support Battalion Provost Marshal Office

The Giessen Privately Owned Vehicle re-sale lot is ready to receive your operational POVs.

The lot is located in the parking lot adjacent to Building 124 (old MP station) on the Giessen Depot — across the street from the Community Mail Room.

All POVs must have a valid U.S. Army Europe registration and liability insurance. Non-operational vehicles may not be kept in the POV re-sale lot.

If you are interested in selling your POV, visit the Giessen Area Support Team office in the 284th Base Support Battalion Headquarters — Building 115. Bring your registration and proof of insurance and know the estimated length of time you wish to keep the POV in the re-sale lot.

It is an open-air parking lot, giving prospective buyers the opportunity to browse the lot at any time. There is security

lighting in the lot and Military Police make routine checks during hours of darkness and weekends.

If you are interested in buying a car, stop by the AST and ask what they have available or go to the lot and check out the vehicles for yourself.

The goal of re-sale lot organizers is to bring buyers and sellers together in one location to prevent congestion at other popular re-sale points such as the Post Exchange, housing areas and other places.

According to the 284th BSB Installation Traffic Code, POVs for re-sale can only be parked in the designated re-sale lot. Non-operational POVs must still be kept in the non-op lot of the Auto Crafts Center. Military Police will enforce these and other aspects of the Installation Traffic Code.

Any vehicles for sale that are parked in another area on post must be moved to the lot to be in compliance with regulations as quickly as possible.



People wanting to put their Privately Owned Vehicles on display for sale are advised to use the new POV re-sale lot on the Giessen Depot. The lot is for operational vehicles only, officials said.

First price hike since 1995

School lunch prices to be raised this year

By Capt. Diane Weed

Army and Air Force Exchange Service Public Affairs Office

The price of a “full-priced meal” served in the Army and Air Force Exchange Service overseas school meal program will increase by 10 cents for the 2004/2005 school year — the first increase in nine years.

This year’s price adjustment is necessary to cover recent increases in food, labor and transportation costs. The free, reduced price (40 cents) and breakfast meals, which constitute 40 percent of meals served in AAFES school cafeterias, will not be affected. Elementary school student meals will be \$2.05 and middle/high school meals will be \$2.20.

AAFES officials will continue to review

the pricing policy annually to ensure the program is running on a break-even basis. In comparison some schools in the United States are raising breakfast and lunch prices by as much as \$1.

“Our mandate is to provide these meals on a break-even basis. Since AAFES does not generate any earnings from the school meal program, raising the prices is the only way to sustain the program,” said Maj. Gen. Kathryn Frost, AAFES commander. “As much as we hate to raise these prices, this modest increase is in the best interest of the school meal program. AAFES will continue to work with U.S. Department of Agriculture and Department of Defense Education Activity officials to improve this program and to look

for efficiency and economy, ultimately containing the cost as much as possible while continuing to provide a wide variety of nutritious meals to our students.”

AAFES, as the School Food Authority for DoD Overseas Schools, provides U.S. Department of Agriculture approved school meals to students on Army and Air Force installations in 10 countries throughout Europe and the Pacific. Each year the program serves about 4.5 million lunches in 136 schools.

“Reduced prices and free meals are available to students whose families meet USDA income guidelines. The military services and AAFES do not set the criteria,” said Richard Sheff, AAFES vice president of the Food and

Theater Division. “Sponsors may purchase coupons for the USDA patterned meals at the AAFES PX/BX main store cashier’s window.”

At many locations AAFES has implemented an automated school meal payment system. Parents complete an enrollment application, establish an account and the dependents use a Personal Identification Number to pay for pattern meals. In addition to USDA pattern meals, AAFES school cafeterias feature an assortment of healthy menu alternatives.

AAFES school meal daily menus are posted for review at www.aafes.com. Parents and students can forward comments and suggestions on the website directly to the AAFES staff dietitian, Maj. John Ruibal.



Photo by Irma Moore

Celebrating Chaplains Corps anniversary

Guests enjoy refreshments during a celebration of the 229th anniversary of the Chaplains Corps at Giessen's Whiddon Park. The annual observance is held to honor the Army's chaplaincy, which was officially established by the Continental Congress of the United States in a resolution on July 29, 1775.

284th BSB – Friedberg, Giessen

Community spotlight... Community spotlight

Bulk trash pickup

The next bulk trash pickup date is Sept. 10 for all housing areas in the 284th Base Support Battalion. Upcoming pickup dates and more information can be viewed online at www.giessen.army.mil.

One-act plays at Keller Theatre

The Giessen Keller Theater will present an evening of one-act plays featuring comedy, drama and tragedy Sept. 10, 11, 16-18 and 23-25. The box office will be open Wednesday through Friday from 4:30-8 p.m. For details and tickets call mil 343-6515. The show starts at 7:30 p.m.

Spin the wheel

Friedberg Arts and Crafts offers beginning and advanced pottery classes, sculptures and pottery turning on the wheel. Classes are taught monthly. For more information call mil 324-3266.

Make new friends with Kontakt

New in Giessen? Interested in learning German? Would you like to make some German friends, learn about the culture and go on fun outings? Kontakt, the German-American friendship club, is open to military and civilian participants, and all ages are welcome. Meetings are held every Wednesday at 8 p.m. in Building 59 at the Giessen Depot (left inside the main gate). For more information call mil 343-6488 or civ (0641) 4026488.

Organization day closing

All offices of Detachment C, 55th Personnel Services Battalion, in Friedberg will be closed Sept. 2 in observance of the battalion's organization day and welcome home ceremony. For more information call Warrant Officer 1 Jeffrey Gordon at mil 324-3602.

Bad Nauheim Elementary

All newly arriving and returning students need to be registered for the 2004/05 school year. Stop by the school office or register online at <https://registration.eu.odedodea.edu>. A new student/parent orientation for first- to sixth-graders will be held Sept. 1 at 3 p.m. in the school's multi-purpose room. An orientation for kindergarten students and



Celebrity visitor

NASCAR superstar Ernie Irvan talks to 2nd Lt. Austin Maness of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment, and his parents Sam and Jan Maness, during his visit to the Giessen Post Exchange. Irvan, holder of 15 NASCAR Winston Cup victories and 22 career NASCAR Winston Cup pole positions, visited with Soldiers and family members during his visit signing autographs and talking about engines, race tracks and related topics.

Photo by Petra Roberts

parents will be held Sept. 3 at 3 p.m. in classroom 10. Class lists will be posted Sept. 3 at the school.

AAFES job fair

The Army and Air Force Exchange Human Resource office hosts a job fair Sept. 2 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Giessen Post Exchange. The fair is open to the community and provides firsthand information on job opportunities. For details call Hedy DeCosta in Hanau at civ (06181) 958 416.

Substitute teachers, volunteers sought

Giessen Middle/High School seeks substitute teachers for the new school year. Pick up an application at the school's main office. No specific experience is needed. The school also seeks volunteers for the School Advisory Committee and the Booster Club. Lunch monitor positions are also available for up to two hours per day. For more information call Marcia Smith at mil 343-7333.

Employment opportunities at Butzbach Elementary School

Butzbach Elementary School has several employment opportunities available. An edu-

cation aide, GS-4, for three to six hours per week is needed. Requirements are experience working with school-age children, flexibility, ability to work independently and the possession of good organization skills. A substitute teacher for children age 3-12 is sought. Requirements include flexibility in scheduling, dependability, mature decision making, good organization skills and creativity. Clerical positions, GS-4, for three to eight hours per day are available. Applicants should have good social skills with children and adults, be receptive and adaptive to varying individual and school-wide needs, good organizational skills and ability to work independently and with others. Applications are available at the school. For more information call the school at civ (06033) 74520.

School bus registration

School bus registration for the new school year is ongoing. The School Bus Office in Butzbach is open Monday and Tuesday from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1-2 p.m. In Bad Nauheim registration can be conducted at the elementary school Wednesday from 9 a.m. to noon.

Self-Help classes

The Self-Help stores in Giessen and

Friedberg offer self-help classes for adults. The class is needed to allow residents free use of the Self-Help Issue Points which provide materials, supplies, equipment and also loan equipment to housing occupants. The store personnel also provide one-on-one assistance. For details call the Friedberg store at mil 324-3169 and the Giessen store at mil 343-6263.

Tax Center update

Services at the Giessen Tax Center are available by appointment only. Call mil 343-8268 to schedule an appointment. The Friedberg Tax Center is open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. until Sept. 30 for walk-ins and appointments. The center is located in Building 3635, Room 112. For details call mil 324-2275.

WIC-O hours, class

The Women, Infants and Children Overseas office in Butzbach, located in Building 6543, Apartment 3A, is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8 a.m. to noon and from 1-5 p.m. The WIC-O office in Giessen is located in Building 12 on the Giessen Depot and is open Tuesday and Thursday from 8 a.m. to noon and from 1-5 p.m. For appointments call the office in Butzbach at civ (06033) 925 736 and in Giessen at civ (0641) 402 7448.

Army Family Survey could be coming your way

During the month of September randomly selected Army spouses will receive an Army family survey providing them with a chance to voice their opinions on housing, paid and volunteer work, children, health care, Morale, Welfare and Recreation, deployments and other issues. Recipients are encouraged to complete the survey to fine tune the programs that serve Army families. This year survey participants also have the option of completing the survey online. The result of the survey will lead directly to changes in family-focused programs and services to improve the life of Army families. For details go to www.armymwr.com.

German festivals and fairs in the Giessen/Friedberg area

Beer fest in Lich

One does not have to travel far to discover unique opportunities for culture and fun in the Giessen/Friedberg area.

The town of Lich, home to a noted brewery, holds a special festival Sept. 4.

The Licher brewery, which earned its name from American Soldiers after World War II, was originally named Ihring-Melchior, but Americans could not pronounce the name and simply made it Licher. That name has stuck to this day.

The Americans took over the brewery

in 1945, enforcing American beer brewing techniques. That meant the beer was much weaker. In 1952 Licher was allowed to brew according to German standards again and has done so ever since.

The brewery celebrates its 150th anniversary this year and will host an outdoor concert featuring various live bands. The event starts at 6 p.m. and admission is free. "Cool blondes", as beer is often referred to in Germany, will be available at moderate prices. It all takes place near the sports center in Lich. Just follow the signs.

Other happenings

☼ Coming to Giessen Sept. 25 to Oct. 3 is the annual fall fair at Swan Lake, featuring fun for the entire family. Enjoy rides, good food and lots of vendors. Thursday is family day. ☼ Sept. 6-7 enjoy live entertainment in Butzbach as the city hosts the annual Altstadtfest at the marketplace. Top act that Saturday will be the band "Man On The Line and The Simpson Horns." ☼ In Friedberg celebrate the Fall Fair from Sept. 20-24 featuring rides, music and refreshments.

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Bike race helps build relations

More than 80 bikers and 200 bystanders gathered for a German-American mountain bike race hosted by U.S. and host nation city officials at Giessen's Schiffenberg Castle.

American and German bikers competed for the fastest times with one U.S. biker traveling all the way from Spain to take part.

Bikers had to overcome 18 kilometers of challenging terrain as temperatures reached the upper 80s. Despite the tough course, fairness toward competitors was demonstrated throughout the race — particularly in the men's open competition (age 30-39) with two competitors fighting hard for the third place bronze medal. The slightly leading participant, a member of the German police force, reached for the hand of his opponent and crossed the finish line together with him.

"This event, co-hosted by the U.S. forces, the Bike Association Klein-Linden and the city of Giessen, was a great idea and confirms the strong German-American friendship here in Giessen," said Wolfgang Ise, head of the sports department for the city of Giessen.

The 284th Base Support Battalion's Alexander Randall organized the event together with Andreas Leschhorn from the city of Giessen.



Photo by Kal Aust

German and American bikers take off at the start of the Schiffenberg Castle mountain bike race.



Miss Teen USA

Tami Farrell (photo left), Miss Teen USA 2003, talks to youths and performs her newly released single, "Heaven In Your Eye," during a visit to Butzbach Youth and School-Age Services. Farrell's goal is to become a singer and actress. The 19-year-old teen spokesperson toured military communities, talking about efforts on behalf of the National Heart Association and how she aspires to earn the prestigious national honor. "You must follow through the hard work to reach the goal. Everything is possible," Farrell told Butzbach youths during the visit. "I want to give thanks and show my appreciation for all the hard work Soldiers do and bring a little bit of home to the families over here."

Photos by Petra Roberts

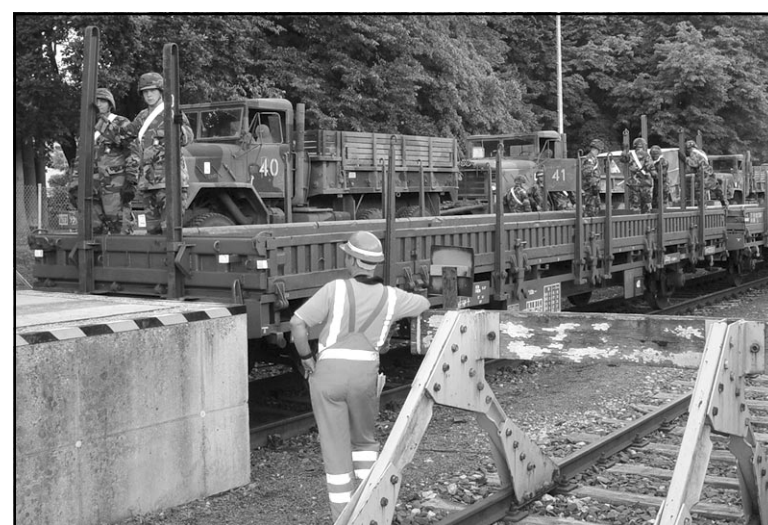


Photo by Petra Roberts

Vehicles roll home from Iraq

Soldiers prepare to unload vehicles of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment, upon the equipment's return to Giessen from Iraq. Soldiers and family members will celebrate the 1st Armored Division's homecoming at ceremonies throughout the 104th Area Support Group in September and October with Friedberg's slated for Sept. 15.

414th BSB – Büdingen, Hanau

Community notes . . . Community notes

Hispanic Heritage trip to Spain

The Equal Opportunity Office hosts a **Hispanic Heritage Month trip to Calella, Spain**, Oct. 14-17. Cost is \$299 including roundtrip transportation by bus and airplane, three overnights in a three-star hotel, tour of Barcelona and meals. Deadline to make payments and sign up is Sept. 15. The EO Office also seeks people to take part in the Hispanic Heritage Month planning committee Sept. 7 in Room 205, Building 1106 on Hutier Kaserne. Call Sgt. 1st Class Gayden at mil 323-2012, Sgt. 1st Class Sanders at mil 323-2998, Sgt. 1st Class Robinson at mil 322-7720 or Sgt. 1st Class Ming at mil 347-3246 for more information about the committee or Spain trip.

PWOC programs

Hanau's Protestant Women of the Chapel hold their fall kickoff Sept. 9 at 9 a.m. at Pioneer Chapel. The group meets during the school year every Thursday from 9-11:30 a.m. at Pioneer Chapel for fellowship, Bible study and encouragement. There is no cost and watch care is provided for children age 5 and younger. Fall studies are "The Battle Belongs to the Lord," "Living in Love with Jesus," "Following God: Life Principles from Women of the Bible." Hanau PWOC also offers a study in Spanish titled "Mi Experiencia con Dios." Call Robin Longworth at civ (06181) 575775 or Cheena Nyhus at civ (06183) 919 984 for more information.

Büdingen PWOC hold their fall kickoff Sept. 15 with a morning of fun and fellowship in the chapel on Armstrong Barracks. Fall Bible study and opportunities for discipleship and service will be on the agenda. For information call Amy Taylor at civ (06042) 979 119 or send email to ain13@aol.com.

Welcome home ceremony

The 55th Personnel Services Battalion will hold a welcome home ceremony and Organization Day Sept. 2 starting at 9 a.m. in the Pioneer Fitness Center. The ceremony will recognize redeployed and rear detachment Soldiers and family members who made a significant impact. All customer service areas will be closed that day including ID card offices and local post offices.

Girl Scout leaders sought

Hanau, Gelnhausen and Büdingen Girl Scouts seek leaders for Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, Cadets and Studio 2B. Call Lisa Wenke at civ (06181) 9062 899 or (0175) 8518 695.

Do-it-yourself classes

The Self-Help Stores offer basic and advanced do-it-yourself classes in Hanau and Büdingen. The classes are free for occupants of government and leased housing. Stop by your local Self-Help Store to reserve a spot or on the day of the class. Classes will be held at the Büdingen Self-Help Store in Building 2208 on Armstrong Barracks Mondays from 10-11 a.m. and at Hanau Self-Help, Building 28 on Pioneer Kaserne, Wednesdays from 10-11 a.m. Lawnmowers, leaf blowers, goggles, weed eaters and other lawn care tools are free loaner items. Gas is provided for the gas



Photo by Midori VanBrunt

Staying safety conscious

Jay Harris of the American Red Cross explains how to use an automatic external defibrillator during the 485th Corps Support Battalion's Safety Stand Down Day on Hanau's Hutier Kaserne Aug. 20. Various agencies including the Provost Marshal's Office, Red Cross, Safety Office, Fire Department and Occupational Health provided a wealth of information and demonstrations during the event. "We want to ensure our Soldiers and family members are safety conscious at work and play," said Capt. Matthew Freede of the 485th CSB.

mowers. You do not have to be a building coordinator to sign out these items. Call the Büdingen store at mil 321-4778 or the Hanau store at mil 322-8200 for information.

Büdingen Pet Jamboree

Büdingen Army Community Service will host a Pet Jamboree Sept. 25 at 11 a.m. on the parade field on Armstrong Barracks. It will include a three-kilometer doggie walk, races, contests, prizes and a canine demonstration by the Military Police. Call mil 321-4786 or civ (06042) 80786 for more information.

Fall Bazaar

Hanau Community Spouses Club holds its Fall Bazaar Sept. 24 from noon to 7 p.m., Sept. 25 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sept. 26 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Fliegerhorst Kaserne's Building 1305.

It will feature food, drinks, entertainment and vendors from all over Europe. The bazaar is open to U.S. ID card holder only. It is stroller friendly. Cash, checks and major credit cards will be accepted. Volunteers are sought to help at the bazaar. If you are interested in volunteering contact Bianca Moton by email at bianca.moton@us.army.mil or by calling civ (0160) 9105 2378.

American Red Cross classes

Hanau's American Red Cross offers classes in CPR and first aid the second week of each month on Tuesday and Thursday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Recertification classes are held Wednesday from 10 a.m. to noon. Register at the Red Cross office in Building 4 on Pioneer Kaserne by paying in advance for the class and book. The classes cost \$30 for

CPR and first aid, \$35 for professional rescuer and \$10 for recertification. All classes are held in the American Red Cross office. Other classes are available on request. Call mil 322-1760 or civ (06181) 88-1760.

AAFES job fairs

AAFES Human Resources will hold a Job Fair at the Giessen Post Exchange Sept. 2 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and at the Hanau PX Sept. 3 from noon to 4 p.m. Call civ (06181) 9584 16 for information. American citizens can apply for Army and Air Force Exchange Service jobs in Hanau, Giessen and Rhein Main on the web at www.aafes.com. Interested local nationals should visit the Human Resources Office at the Wolfgang Shopping Center, next to Popeye's. It is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Or call civ (06181) 958 4403.

School highlights

Argonner Elementary seeks substitute teachers, educational aides and lunch room monitors for the upcoming school year. The school is also in need of parent volunteers to serve on the School Advisory Council and the School Parent Teacher Association. Call the school office at mil 322-8374 for details.

All five schools in the 414th Base Support Battalion will conduct open houses. They will be held at Argonner Elementary School Sept. 7 at 10:45 a.m., Gelnhausen Elementary School Sept. 7 at 1 p.m., Hanau High School Sept. 7 at 1 p.m., Hanau Middle School Sept. 8 at 5 p.m. and Sportfield Elementary School Sept. 9 at 1 p.m.

Army Community Service

Hanau Army Community Service offers an Employment Orientation Sept. 7, 14, 21 and 28 from 10-11:30 a.m. A Dress for Success seminar will be held Sept. 22 from 10-

11:30 a.m. An Interview Techniques seminar will be held Sept. 23 from 10-11:30 a.m. Classes take place in Building 9, Room 104 on Pioneer Kaserne. For information call mil 322-9191.

ACS has 13 computers available for patrons to create resumes and search the Internet for vacancies. All computers are equipped with Internet access, Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Visit ACS on Pioneer Kaserne, Building 9, Room 204, weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Youth craft classes

Every Friday from 10-11:30 a.m. CLEOS offers craft classes for children age 3-6. Children must be accompanied by a parent. Call mil 322-8082 or civ (06181) 88 8082 for reservations.

Youth sports

Registration for fall sports — flag football for ages 10-15 and soccer for ages 3-15 — is now in progress. Call CLEOS at mil 322-9144, civ (06181) 889144 or stop by the CLEOS office in Building 20, Room 10 on Pioneer Kaserne.

Power walks

All 414th Base Support Battalion fitness centers now offer power walks Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 9 a.m.

New VAT Office hours

The Hanau Value Added Tax Office located in the Community Activity Center on Fliegerhorst Kaserne is now open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Crafts opportunities

The American Sampler Crafts Shop in Building 1355 at the Wolfgang Shopping Center features introduction to framing, Wednesday from 5-8 p.m.; portrait studio appointments, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; community quilt group, Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; camera class Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. or by appointment; wood safety orientation, every first and third Sunday from 4-5 p.m.; black and white film development class, every Thursday or Friday by appointment; beginner's sewing class, by appointment. Call the Crafts Shop at mil 322-8082 or civ (06181) 88 8082.

Hearts Apart Group

Meet others who have deployed spouses to share common experiences every Tuesday at 10 a.m. at Büdingen Army Community Service, Building 2207. Call mil 321-4786 or civ (06042) 80786. Although most Soldiers have returned, the group will continue to meet throughout September and October.

Planners needed

Community members are sought to serve as 414th Base Support Battalion Army Family Action Plan conference planners. Well organized, committed and efficient individuals with great people skills are needed for the steering committee and other roles. The first meeting will be held Sept. 15 at Army Community Service, Building 9 on Pioneer Kaserne, at 3 p.m. Call Amy Cuebas at civ (06181) 88-8766 or mil 322-8766.

502nd Engineers load gear for Iraq

Story and photos by
Dennis Johnson
130th Engineer Brigade Public
Affairs Office

The engineers were waiting when the train arrived. Soldiers of Hanau's 502nd Engineer Company gathered at the railhead on Pioneer Kaserne Aug. 16 for a second day of loading heavy equipment onto German rail cars for shipment to Iraq.

The medium girder bridge company, part of 565th Engineer Battalion, 130th Engineer Brigade, was in the last stages of preparation for its return to Iraq only 11 months after its return from its first deployment.

"The 320th Engineer Company is helping to push out the 502nd," said Sgt. 1st Class Richard Carlson. "Personnel from the 502nd are driving the vehicles onto the train, which will carry them to the seaport for loading onto a ship bound for Iraq. About 45 Soldiers from the 320th are helping with the blocking, bracing and ground-guiding. We're making sure we get it done quickly, but safely. We make sure everyone wears gloves and the proper uniform—a Kevlar helmet and a reflective



Soldiers place blocks under a medium girder bridge "bay" as it's loaded on a rail car in Hanau.

tive belt—and see that no one does anything dangerous."

About a dozen and a half trucks loaded with trailers, cranes and

bulldozers were lined up for loading, and the bays of a medium girder bridge sat by the rails ready to be hoisted onto flat-bed cars by huge cranes.

"We're monitoring the rail operations for all corps units that are deploying or redeploying," said Ed Hoffman, V Corps safety director who came up from Heidelberg to assist in the operation. "The equipment here is a little bigger than normal, but we have the systems in place to accomplish this loading safely. We're another set of eyes here for the command."

Approximately 200 Soldiers of the 502nd will return to Iraq sometime in September. Five Soldiers from the 77th Maintenance Company based on Hütten Kaserne will accompany the 502nd to provide maintenance support.

"Most are veterans who've been there before. Going back—it's the

job, it's your duty," said one Soldier involved in the loading.

"We have a bunch of units going back, and the morale and preparation is high, almost as high as at the 502nd," said Maj. Gen. Walter Wojdakowski, V Corps deputy commander, who was at Pioneer to observe the loading and speak with the officers and Soldiers about the mission in Iraq.

"I think there'll be some bridging missions there. The insurgents have destroyed a number of bridges in Iraq which are critical to the infrastructure, and that's what these guys do," said Wojdakowski.

"They [units presently in Iraq] are repairing the existing bridges in Iraq. I think we'll go in and remove the temporary bridges that were laid on top while the permanent bridges were being repaired," said Capt. Joshua Stringer, 502nd Engineer Company commander.

Wojdakowski presented V Corps coins and chatted with four of Stringer's Soldiers: Pfc. Brad Keen, Sgt. James Winberry, Sgt. 1st Class Dwayne Cordier and Lt. Sharon Edens.

"I was runner-up in the Army Engineers Association's Grizzly competition," said Edens. "That's a competition for the best platoon leader of the year. It's based on your experiences and accomplishments over the past year, and I was deployed with the 502nd in Iraq for that entire time."

Rail operations continued as Wojdakowski left for a meeting with Col. Thomas W. Kula, 130th Engineer Brigade commander.

The 502nd has spent months readying its equipment and Soldiers for the return to Operation Iraqi Freedom, said Stringer.

"The deployment orders arrived while we were at the Normandy celebrations June 5," said Stringer. His Soldiers took part in the ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of D-day.

"In preparation we recently completed a mission readiness exercise at the Aschaffenburg Training Area and then we deployed to Grafenwöhr. There we conducted weapons ranges, where all Soldiers re-qualified on their assigned weapons and executed a convoy live-fire exercise. We also practiced a maintenance halt, where we stop the convoy, pull security and perform maintenance. That's a common practice as we'll be convoying into Iraq from Kuwait."

With attacks on convoys commonplace in Iraq, the convoy live-fire training has become a requirement for all units going downrange. "We'll do it again in Kuwait before we deploy," said Stringer.

Stringer's Soldiers will have a break before they head to Iraq.

"The unit is getting 18 days of block leave starting this week, so we can get back here before our window of opportunity to fly," said Stringer.

"Seventy-five percent of the Soldiers are going away on leave and about half are returning to the United States to see friends and family before they deploy again. Personally, we're going to London since my wife loves England. English history is her passion. Then we'll spend a few days at a resort near Stonehenge," he said.

After the break it will be back to a hot, difficult and dangerous assignment in Iraq. "You have to deal with it and go out and do the mission," said Stringer.



Maj. Gen. Walter Wojdakowski, V Corps deputy commander, talks to Capt. Joshua Stringer, 502nd Engineer Company commander (right) and safety officials during a visit to the Hanau railhead Aug. 16.

127th MPs repulse 'Mahdi army' assault

Battle insurgents on streets of Baghdad

By 1st Lt. Erik S. Archer
127th Military Police Company executive officer

Thousands of spent shell casings littered the main street of Baghdad's Al-Shoula neighborhood Aug. 6 after a fierce gun battle in which 127th Military Police Company Soldiers decisively engaged and killed over a dozen insurgents. Only days before the same Soldiers had patrolled the neighborhood, smiling and waving with residents and passing out candy.

The day began like any other for the "Roughnecks" of 1st Platoon. As the temperature crept up to 130 degrees they left Forward Operating Base Ferrin-Huggins for the Al-Ghazalia Police Station to teach a refresher course on cordon and search missions to Iraqi Police. Because of an increased threat assessment in the Al-Shoula neighborhood, platoon leader, 1st Lt. Tristan Vasquez, decided to detour through Al-Shoula en route to Al-Ghazalia. The Roughnecks turned off Route Force and onto Shoula Creek Road, the area's main thoroughfare.

Shoula Creek Road consists of two, two-lane roads separated by a creek of human waste and garbage. The Soldiers sensed imminent danger as they looked down the avenue into the normally bustling neighborhood. The usually crowded main street was empty, like an old Western town boarded up before a gunfight. Al-Shoula residents somehow knew trouble was brewing and had left.

The MPs tensed for a fight and drove down the street. A minute later insurgents launched a massive ambush of AK-47 fire and a barrage of Rocket Propelled Grenades.

The High Mobility, Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle gunners immediately returned well-aimed fire and the insurgents dropped from their perches as the MPs fought through the ambush. Vasquez decided to break contact with the enemy and head to Al-Ghazalia Police Station to establish communications with the company.

The MPs continued to take a heavy volume of small arms fire as they drove down the main street toward Al-Ghazalia. The gunners rapidly scanned windows and rooftops for enemy combatants. As the Roughnecks approached their turn, they noticed a disabled Cavalry unit in front of them — five reinforced HMMWVs and four Bradley Fighting Vehicles surrounded an overturned HMMWV. Insurgents launched a wall of RPG and machine-gun fire as the Roughnecks headed for the disabled unit.

One RPG skipped underneath Staff Sgt. Thomas Roth's vehicle while another struck the window of Vasquez's vehicle. The window shattered, but held. The MP gunners unhesitatingly returned fire, halted the attack and reached the stricken convoy.

The insurgents had hit the Cav with one of their RPGs. One vehicle was overturned, its Soldiers huddled around it with a badly wounded Soldier trapped beneath.

Under withering fire Vasquez, Roth, Sgt. Matthew Rivera and the 1st Platoon Soldiers exited their vehicles, linked up with the Cav



Photo by 1st Lt. Erik S. Archer

Teams of 127th Military Police Soldiers in armored HMMWVs take defensive positions around the Al-Shoula Police Station to defend it from attack by 'Mahdi army' insurgents Aug. 6.

Soldiers and took up a defensive position.

At the same time Capt. Kevin Hanrahan, 127th MP Company commander, and his security team were leaving FOB Huggins-Ferrin en route to Camp Victory. Alerted that Al-Shoula Police Station was under attack, Hanrahan and his Soldiers headed to the scene. En route Hanrahan decided to bypass the station and head directly to the firefight.

While the Cavalry Soldiers focused on trying to free their trapped comrade, Roth and Rivera took over security emplacement. Bullets snapped by their heads as the MPs realigned the Cav vehicles to turn their fire on the enemy. Vasquez called on two of her combat lifesavers to help the critically wounded Cav Soldier. Spcs. Kerina Ward and Brandi Noe advanced under a hail of gunfire to tend to the wounded while Vasquez called in an air Medevac.

MPs rush to rescue

As the battle raged three teams of 4th Platoon MPs heard the call for help over the radio and bolted toward Al-Shoula. The "Lightning" Soldiers turned into Shoula Creek Road, and patrol leader Staff Sgt. Michiel Watkins observed the same eerie stillness that the Roughnecks had earlier.

Distant gunshots and explosions punctuated the unnatural quiet. As the Lightning element raced down the hostile street, Watkins noticed three roadblocks approaching. Insurgents had arranged several large pieces of concrete in the middle of the road. About 15 feet beyond that they had erected a line of office desks across the road, and another 15 feet beyond that more chunks of concrete.

The driver in the lead Lightning vehicle,

Spc. Nicholas Wilson, slowed down and asked Watkins what to do. "Speed up and drive through," said Watkins. Wilson accelerated and headed toward the roadblock.

As the first vehicle approached, the enemy opened up with a frenzy of RPGs from the right. One whooshed by, missing the lead vehicle by two feet. Two more RPGs shot by the convoy, an Improvised Explosive Device exploded on their left and AK-47 fire raked the vehicles. Watkins ordered the convoy to fight through the ambush, and the Lightning gunners turned into the withering fire, scanned for targets and returned fire.

The three teams fought through the ambush and emerged unscathed down the road. Watkins noticed the Roughneck elements about 400 meters ahead on the other side of the creek. Not knowing whether there was another bridge down the road, and fully aware of the gravity of such a decision, Watkins ordered his Soldiers to turn around and re-cross the kill zone to reach Vasquez's patrol.

The gunners, without the protection of ballistic windows and doors like the rest of the Soldiers in the convoy, turned and faced the hostile side of the street as the trucks again traversed the shooting gallery. They began taking and returning fire immediately.

Watkins and his Soldiers pushed through the ambush and crossed to the other side of the creek. He immediately called Vasquez on the radio for a situation report. He dismounted his Soldiers directly across from the initial ambush site to draw fire away from Vasquez's group. Within minutes they had killed numerous insurgents dressed in the black clothes and masks of the "Mahdi army."

Meanwhile, two miles down the road at

Al-Shoula Police Station, the other half of the Roughneck platoon held a defensive perimeter. Sgt. Thomas Bowman heard Vasquez's radio call for a Medevac, quickly organized his Soldiers and sped to their assistance.

Bowman's group was ambushed within 100 meters of the station. Six RPGs exploded around them and AK-47 fire peppered the vehicles. Bowman's gunners, Pfc. Joshua Jasinski, Spc. James Tuman and Pfc. Matthew Quevedo, returned fire immediately. "The only thing that kept us alive was Spc. Tuman and Pfc. Quevedo," said Bowman. "The enemy could not accurately hit us due to those gunners laying down fire and killing the enemy."

Bowman's Soldiers fought through the ambush, saw Watkins' group across the street and crossed the river to link up with them. The firing was fierce. Bowman spotted three men in black moving through an alleyway carrying an AK-47, an RPG launcher and a heavy machine gun. Bowman and his gunner felled them with a stream of rifle and Squad Automatic Weapon fire.

At the same time Hanrahan's security team turned into Shoula Creek Road, driving over tires strewn across the street in a hasty attempt at a roadblock. In the distance a burning truck belched thick, black smoke. Picking the shortest route to his beleaguered Soldiers, Hanrahan decided to run the gauntlet of the kill zone. His security teams moved quickly down the main road, the gunners scanning anxiously for targets.

When the three vehicles were about 100 meters from the burning car, five to 15 insurgents ambushed them with AK-47 fire from the alleyways and rooftops. Rounds plunked

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off the vehicles and zipped past the gunners as the team raced out of the kill zone under covering fire from Spc. Christopher Frady and Pfc. Nathan McClure.

Still under fire, Hanrahan's group crossed a median and bridge to link up with the Roughnecks. The firefight was in full swing as he caught up with Vasquez, with most of the enemy fire coming from two buildings and an alleyway across the street. Glass, concrete and plaster sprayed the air as the Bradleys fired their 25-mm Bushmaster cannons. The Cavalry Soldiers hit the buildings with their M-240B machine guns and the MPs fired their SAWs and M-203 grenade launchers.

Hanrahan immediately placed his security teams in the gaps in the perimeter. Meanwhile the Lightning platoon continued drawing enemy fire away from 1st Platoon, engaging the enemy at the first ambush site and providing key flank protection. At this juncture 1st Sgt. Damian McIntosh arrived with Soldiers of the 2nd Platoon "Hellraisers" and began helping the Lightning Platoon.

As the battle continued OH-58 Kiowa helicopters swooped overhead, searching for insurgent positions. Iraqi fighters made their way up a narrow alleyway to gain a better firing position, and Hanrahan directed his lone MK-19 grenade launcher equipped HMMWV to the front of the perimeter for a clearer view of the alleyway.

Sgt. Tim Burns raced for the truck and drove it outside the perimeter. Frady, the



Photo by 1st Lt. Erik S. Archer

Capt. Kevin Hanrahan (from left), 127th MP commander, observes the Al-Shoula battlefield as Sgt. Jason Barlow controls Pfc. Steven Howard's rate of fire. More than 20 insurgents attacked the position before being repulsed.

MK-19 gunner, immediately began lobbing grenade rounds down the alleyway. Burns, exposing himself to enemy fire, calmly issued firing orders to Frady, and as a team they destroyed the insurgents and their cover.

Frady continued to spray MK-19 fire into the alleyway, and when the Iraqis again fired from the building, he shifted fire to attack them. The whole building shook from the

concussion of the 40-millimeter rounds and a thick layer of dust and debris rose into the air. The insurgents were silenced.

Hanrahan conferred with Vasquez and decided to leave the now quiet road to check on the Al-Shoula Police Station. He radioed other 127th MP units in the area to rally there in case insurgents had taken the station. He directed 4th Platoon to conduct a movement

to contact directly through the objective to cover the withdrawal of the other platoons.

Reaching the police station, they found another Cavalry unit had already occupied and defended it. After a brief conference, the Cav unit left to conduct a movement to contact mission and Hanrahan and his Soldiers waited for the rest of the 127th MPs to arrive.

Once all the MPs had rallied at the station Hanrahan and McIntosh decided to raid the local hospital for wounded insurgents. Hanrahan's security teams and the 4th Platoon teams reached Al-Shoula Hospital, established security and entered the building. 1st Lt. Scott Chalkley, platoon leader of 4th Platoon, helped lead a rapid room-to-room sweep, locating many dead and wounded insurgents. Even as they swept the wards, the Soldiers stopped to assist doctors and treat patients.

At the same time 1st Lt. Tim Price, the platoon leader of 3rd Platoon, ran a sweep at a nearby hospital and counted more dead and wounded insurgents. Hanrahan called up his executive officer and reserve teams to defend the police station overnight, and the sun set over the smoking urban battlefield.

The MPs had fought off a well-emplaced, determined enemy, killing over a dozen insurgents hell-bent on their destruction. It was a forceful step, albeit through death and destruction in the streets of Al-Shoula, toward eliminating those who would cause chaos and deny the Iraqi people at large the chance for a peaceful, prosperous future.